

Leeks, sweet potatoes featured

Recipes courtesy of Barbara Beznos. See related column on Taste front.

LEEK AND MUSHROOM APPETIZER

4-6 small leeks
1 pound mixed wild mushrooms (crimini, shiitake or oyster)
1/2 cup chopped red tomatoes
1/4 cup olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
1 clove garlic, chopped
Fresh herbs (parsley, dill or any combination)
Broth (Vegetable or chicken for basting)

Wash and soak leeks. Cut off one inch from green area and discard green tops. Slice white part lengthwise.

Soak mushrooms to remove all grit. Remove stems. Towel dry and slice very thin.

Begin to saute leeks in olive oil and garlic. Use a non-stick pan.
Add mushrooms and as they get soft, add tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper. To avoid sticking, use a broth by pouring a little at a time as needed. Just keep mixture wet.

Simmer for 30 minutes and when almost done, add herbs of choice.
Cool at room temperature or refrigerate. Serves 4-6.

Serve as an appetizer with crackers or pita tri-

angles. Note: Do not use Portabella mushrooms, as they 'bleed.'

SWEET POTATO RATATOUILLE (VEGETABLE STEW)

2 long, thin sweet potatoes, peeled and chopped
3 long, thin purple eggplants, cut into small pieces, and if so desired, peeled
1 large green pepper, sliced
1 large red pepper, sliced
2 medium tomatoes, chopped
1 clove garlic, sliced
1/2 large sweet Vidalia onion, diced
1/4 cup marinara sauce
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups vegetable or chicken broth
Seasoning to your taste
Fresh herbs or herb soup starter

Lightly saute all vegetables in oil.

Add sweet potatoes and ingredients.

Cook in pressure cooker or covered pan 10-20 minutes until soft.

Serve over arborio soft rice.

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grated carrots. Cook on medium heat until the carrot softens — about 5 minutes, stirring often. Add broth and water and bring to boil. Stir in washed raw rice; it will turn orange in color. Cover saucepan and reduce heat. Simmer for about 10 minutes. Cover and cook on low to medium-low an additional 20 minutes or until rice is soft. Be sure to stir often to prevent sticking. Stir in margarine. Serve with bean dish.

FRIED PLANTAIN

Three ripe plantains (skins brown/yellow)
1 cup corn oil
Cinnamon
Raw sugar cane (optional)

Peel the plantain with a knife. Slice in circular pieces about 1/2 - 3/4 inch thick. In medium-size frying pan, heat corn oil in frying pan until it sizzles (on medium high). Fry plantain in oil for two minutes or more. Make sure bottom of fruit doesn't burn. Before turning fruit over check the bottom, plantain should be very dark brown. Slight burning on the edges is fine. Fry the other side until it also turns dark brown, about two minutes or more. When the fruit is dark golden brown, remove from oil.

Dominicans use a plantain flattening device to

squeeze out the excess corn oil. This is done with two round wooden disks, the size of a coffee saucer, and latched together with a simple hinge. The plantain is placed between the disks and squeezed.

However, this can be done by putting fruit on a dish and pressing lightly with a metal spatula. The excess oil will drain and the fruit will slightly flatten.

Lightly dust immediately with cinnamon. Dust lightly with raw sugar cane if desired. (Optional, to serve plantain as a lunch or dinner side, skip the sugar.)

MANGO COCONUT JUICE

3 mangos peeled and cut in pieces
1/2 fresh coconut
1/4 cup water

In blender, puree coconut until soft — add a dash of water if coconut sticks to blades too much. Add mangos and puree and add 1/2 cup of water to reduce thickness (more water for thinner juice, less for a thicker.) Serve immediately. Optional: 1/4 cup coconut milk can also be used and reduce water to 1/4 cup.

Honeyed lamb flavored with Mediterranean flair

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A simple dish that has ground lamb as its base, Honeyed Lamb With Couscous gets a distinctive Mediterranean flavor from ingredients that include almonds, honey and fragrant spices.

Here's the bonus for cooks: It can be made in a little over half an hour, to serve six diners. The recipe includes the Honey Lemon Sauce that gives the meatballs a succulent finish as they cook.

HONEYED LAMB WITH COUSCOUS

(Preparation 20 minutes, roasting time 15 minutes)

1 cup (4 ounces) blanched whole almonds
2 large cloves garlic
1 pound lean ground lamb
1/4 cup honey
1 egg
2-1/2 teaspoons curry powder
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 medium sweet bell peppers, mixed red, green and yellow, cut into thin strips
1 teaspoon olive oil
Honey Lemon Sauce (recipe follows)
4 cups cooked couscous

Preheat oven to 375 F. Lightly oil a 13-by-9-inch baking pan.

Finely chop almonds in food processor. With blade running, drop in garlic cloves; process until

finely chopped. Add lamb, honey, egg, curry powder, salt, cumin and cinnamon; process until well mixed.

Form mixture into 18 meatballs and place in prepared baking pan. Place pepper strips in separate pan; drizzle with 1 teaspoon olive oil. Roast lamb and peppers at 375 F for 10 minutes. Meanwhile, prepare sauce.

Remove peppers from oven; set aside. Pour Honey Lemon Sauce over lamb in pan; toss to coat. Return lamb to the oven; roast 5 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened. Serve meatballs over couscous; garnish with pepper slices.

Makes 6 servings.

HONEY LEMON SAUCE

1/3 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup honey
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon cayenne

In a small bowl, whisk together juice, honey, oil, garlic, cumin, salt and cayenne. Set aside.

Nutrition information per serving (1/6 of finished recipe): 563 cal., 27 g fat, 86 mg chol., 848 mg sodium, 20 g carbs., 18 g dietary fiber, 46 g pro.

Recipe from National Honey Board. On the Net: www.honey.com

OCC student is semi-finalist in competition

Valerie Ann Bogulawski of Farmington Hills has made it into the semi-finals of Alizé's Culinary Mentorship Challenge II with her original recipe, Alizé Triple Grand Terrine.

The elementary school teacher and now full-time culinary student at Oakland Community College was one of more than 200 aspiring chefs to submit

their original Alizé recipe.

Bogulawski is one of 10 chefs to have the chance to win a scholarship and trip to the famed French Culinary school, Le Cordon Bleu, and a month-long apprenticeship to executive chef Diane Forley at Verbena in New York City.

To enter Alizé's Culinary Mentorship Challenge II, aspiring

women chefs were asked to submit recipes containing Alizé, a beverage which blends French cognac and passion fruit juice, Alizé Red Passion, which adds the flavor of cranberry to the original blend, or Alizé's V.S. or V.S.O.P. Cognac, as an ingredient.

The 10 semi-final entries are now being judged by a panel.

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